

Oct 25, 1962 (WH typing)

Political path

This path has several branches, both as to the forum in which negotiations are carried out, and with regard to the steps to be taken.

With respect to the forum, we are already in the UN and this could be combined with private approaches on the side. We could follow up the U Thant proposals in order to get into prompt discussion with the Soviets. This is almost essential since the Soviets will almost certainly not put forward or indicate agreement to proposals publicly made.

Another method would be to propose or have someone such as U Thant propose a direct meeting with Khrushchev. He has publicly indicated his readiness for such a meeting in his letter to Bertrand Russell and could not have been expected, at this stage, to have made proposals directly to the President for fear of a rebuff. It would be difficult, however, for him to refuse an invitation from the President. A direct meeting would have to mean the continuance of the quarantine and would be difficult for us unless there was progress on proposals to ensure a standstill under UN control. It would probably involve discussions over Berlin or, as a minimum, our missile bases in Turkey. A prompt proposal for an agreement to a meeting with Khrushchev might defer or avoid strong Soviet reaction to our stopping one of their ships.

As a background for political action that would have any hope of success, it would be important to minimize, so far as possible, any forceful action against Soviet vessels in carrying out the quarantine.

The following political actions might be considered:

1. A proposal in some forum to withdraw our missiles from Turkey in return for Soviet withdrawal of their missiles from Cuba. This might be expressed in generalized form, such as withdrawal of missiles from territory contiguous or in proximity of the territory of the other.
2. An alternative approach might be to have a proposal for the UN to send teams to Cuba and Turkey to take control over the missiles there pending the outcome of negotiations. U Thant might be put up to advancing such proposals.
3. Approach to Castro

An approach would be made to Castro through a Latin American representative in Cuba, probably the Brazilian Ambassador, pointing out that Cuba was merely being exploited in the interests of the Soviet Union and that any of the possible paths by which the Cuban crisis can be expected to develop will result in the overthrow of his regime, if not its physical destruction. It could be pointed out that President Kennedy has stated that only two subjects were not negotiable between the US and Castro: military ties to the USSR and aggressive actions of any kind in Latin America.

If the Castro Government considers it has no freedom to act because of the presence of Soviet technicians, we would be prepared to undertake to deal with this problem. We would have to give some assurances, regardless of whether we intended to carry them out, that we would not ourselves undertake to overthrow the regime or support others trying to do so.

Comment on K letter of 26 Oct, 27 Oct, and JFK reply of 8 pm 27 Oct

1. K simply doesn't make any offer to withdraw missiles; he says that given commitment, ~~would~~ he would make commitment ~~not~~ that Sov vessels bound for Cuba ((at the moment? or indefinitely!)) would not carry weapons; and that there would no longer be any "necessity" for Sov specialists, or armaments. But SU had already said--on Sept 11--that they had no "necessity" for missiles on Cuba: with which we could agree. This is--evidently--not tantamount to saying that they wouldn't put them there, or once there, would take them out.

2. The Oct 27 letter is, in fact, quite compatible with the Oct 26 letter (though not with F-S exchange). If missiles were "necessary," then a trade with Turkish missiles wouldn't be acceptable, so far as Cuba were concerned. But if they weren't necessary...they were available for bargaining; removal of the Turkish missiles would justify the trouble of taking them out.

3. The JFK letter purports to read into the Oct 26 letter certain proposals--but these couldn't possibly be read into that letter. They just aren't there. This would be known not only to K but to anyone in Moscow who knew the K letter. If the ~~the~~ letter had ~~not~~ been published shortly, the effect would have been most peculiar. What JFK was really referring to was the F offer. (Did X explain this ploy in his interview with Y?)

Oct 26, 1:10 pm

Pres. I think I spoke to you about this problem of the Italians and the Turks, whether we ought to get into some private negotiation and what conditions we would make that change.

Ball: Yes, we are just getting a telegram back. We've had one in from Ankara and I'm expecting one from [unclear] today.

Pres: We were told of the substitution of the Polaris in place.

Ball: No, what we were doing, we are just querying our Embassies to see how they would react and get a political reading on it. The problem is that this, I am having a study made, I think it may be ready now, on the involvement with NATO and how this thing has to be handled with the other NATO countries. We have got a little work going forward.

Pres: OK. It may be that we will want to make that offer at some point.

Ball: We are going forward.

5:45 pm.

Nitze: They are working on the Turkish problem is that right?

Ball: Yes there is a group working on it.

Nitze: We take a very dim view. We have to contemplate now, in this kind of a thing, negotiations apart from Cuba would just ruin us all the way around.

Ball--let me be quite clear.--we have no intention of seeing it pushed into negotiations. I am doing this at the Pres's request to see what it would be, if later on he wanted to consider it. The Department is no happier about it than you are.

Nitze..not that we love these things. We wanted to get rid of it before. It is really the political/military thing.

Ball--did you see a telegram I got in from Finletter this morning on this thing?

Nitze--Yes, I have it before me now. I just wanted to get my ear in while you are at this stage of the game.

Ball--the President wants work done on it.

Nitze--Sure. Thanks George.

Friday, Oct 26, 1962, 3:36 pm

phone, Stev--Sec

S finds rumors of invasion and that has upset everything and the Afro-Asians are alarmed. Apparently, White made some statements about further measures. S. Thinks it would be a good idea to clamp down any of that talk from Dept. or WH. ...S thinks there is an outside possibility with prompt assurances of no attack by US or exiles that we might short-circuit the whole thing and get the dismantling and withdrawal in exchange for assurances re Cuba. It indicates the Dept must start thinking about guarantees it would give rex territorial sovereignty by OAS ~~xxxx~~ others line they are taking is weapons are to deter attack by US and they, if they were sure US would not attack and had adequate commitments, would consider weapons unnecessary.

..If we can't short-circuit, there is the question of what constitutes the meaning of non-operable, etc. S hopes someone can look at this.

((meanwhile, letter had been sent; F-S meeting.))

(draft of instructions to Finletter, Oct 26?)

1. Last public letter of K indicates willingness to trade withdrawal of offensive missiles in Cuba for withdrawal of Jupiters in Turkey.
2. While we remain hopeful that deal can be made for denuclearizing Cuba on US promise to guarantee Cuba's territorial integrity we must realistically be prepared for possible deal to trade removal Turkish Jupiters for Cuban missiles.
3. This can be done without adversely disturbing balance nuclear power since obsolete Jupiters can be replaced by Polaris in Eastern Med.
4. Immediate problem is to persuade NATO powers US is not capitulating nor is it trading away Europe's security to advance its own.
5. Among arguments to be made are following:
 - a) Existence of bases on the periphery of SU have long been an irritant and source of tension.
 - b) Sov nuclear power on the doorstep of the US is a menace to all NATO countries. This constitutes very large increment to Sov ability to destroy nuclear retaliatory power which is the central core of NATO security.
 - c) Because the US cannot accept this menace the alternatives are either a negotiated deal or a US air strike and probable invasion of Cuba.
 - d) Such a military action would mean great risk for all NATO countries. First, it would almost certainly invite Sov response elsewhere either against the Jupiter bases in Turkey and Italy or against Berlin or some other NATO target. Second it would immobilize substantial US forces possibly for a substantial period of time. Third it would involve a grave danger of escalation.
6. With the beginning today of Cuban action against US planes engaged in necessary surveillance or work on Cuban missile sites, the consequent destruction of an American U2 and the risk of increased losses in next two or three days with pressure for retaliation the situation is becoming hourly more grave and the President must have adequate freedom of action if he is to find a ~~xxxxx~~ solution through negotiation.
7. In view of these circumstances regard it as urgent that you convene NAC meeting for Sunday afternoon.

Oct 27, 9:29 pm from USOR

Lorin claimed Oct 26 letter to President was confidential message and was designed to "reduce tensions." Substantive proposal, he maintained, was in Oct 27 letter which was published.

Oct 28, 12:25 am; for Bonlen from Pres

Go to Colombey Sunday with letter and briefing material to Finletter: I am asking Amb. Bonlen to make sure that you are fully informed of the current situation in Cuba. The situation is clearly growing more tense and if satisfactory responses are not received from the other side in the next forty-eight hours ((from Sunday?)) the situation is likely to enter a progressively intense military phase.

We are trying to make our determination just as clear as our readiness for a proper settlement. It gives me great courage in these days to know that we have your support, as expressed in your last interview with Amb. Bonlen, and I should be glad to know of any further views you may have. ((drafted by Bundy, Johnson))

same to Dowling.

at same time: Oct 26 letter sent to Macmillan and de Gaulle.